

# Hundreds attend Lake Bistineau bill meeting

By **Michelle Bates** - Apr 25, 2016

**SHARE THIS**       

Residents of Lake Bistineau filled the gym at Doyline High School and many say they don't want more taxation and are against Senate Bill 415, which would form a commission for the lake.



*Rep. Gene Reynolds, District 10, explains the reason behind the drafting of Senate Bill 415 as Sen. Ryan Gatti, District 36, looks on. Michelle Bates/Press-Herald*

Sen. Ryan Gatti, District 36, was at a town hall meeting Saturday to explain the purpose of the bill and get feedback from residents on the bill. Some even shouted from the audience to kill the bill.

"This is our first of three meetings, and we're going to go to each community to talk about the bill and get their input," he said. "There were a lot of people that just said kill the bill, and that may not be an option for us. We may have to keep modifying the bill to fix the concerns of the people that were here today."

Rep. Gene Reynolds, District 10, says they, along with police jurors from Bossier, Webster and Bienville parishes, received a letter from the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries telling them they need to form a commission or committee; otherwise they would turn Lake Bistineau into a wildlife management area.

"In February, we got a letter from Wildlife and Fisheries and there is a commission under Wildlife and Fisheries that set forth rules that stated that every body of water in the State of Louisiana would have to come up with some local rules and regulations about lake usage, duck blinds and how to use the lake or sometime this summer or fall, the rules and regulations would go back to a Wildlife Management Area," he said. "All the duck blinds would have to come down every afternoon. Wildlife management can then set limits on all kinds of things."

Gatti says LDWF has given them an ultimatum, and his concern is that if something is not done this year, then the state would take over the lake.

Residents began to express their anger and disappointment with the power the commission would have under the bill's original form. Several said they don't want another government body taxing them when they already pay taxes on their properties and have representation through the legislature and the police juries.



*Residents wait their turn to ask questions regarding Senate Bill 415, which if passed, will form a commission or committee for Lake Bistineau. Michelle Bates/Press-Herald*

Chris Brown, a Bistineau resident and Caddo Parish firefighter, says he is disappointed in the bill and does not feel there should be “another layer” of government oversight.

“When I started reading this 16-page bill, I got madder and madder the further I read,” he said. “I felt like I’d been betrayed immediately. I took it as a personal attack to me and my family and my friends and neighbors around the lake. If all the tax money in the state that funds all the entities that we already have...they’re already tasked with keeping up Lake Bistineau. If all of that money is not enough, putting a tax burden on the people who have chosen to live here is not the answer.”

The bill would create jurisdiction by residents for Lake Bistineau and would create a taxing district to generate income. The idea is to have enough money to assist LDWF in its fight against giant salvinia as well as generate income for any lake projects, such as taking on the costs of Lake Bistineau State Park. According to figures Gatti presented, the state spends roughly \$693,000 to keep up the state park while revenue is only \$231,000.

If the taxing district is created, Gatti’s figures show an even number of income that would be generated. Had they set the taxing district parish wide for all three parishes, the amount would have been unbalanced: \$244,000 from Bossier Parish, \$97,000 from Bienville and \$67,000 from Webster, he said.

“The purpose in what we are trying to do is return control of the lake from the state and Baton

Rouge to the locals," Gatti said. "Any tax money that is generated is spent here. It doesn't go to Baton Rouge; it stays here on Lake Bistineau where it needs to be."

With the language in the bill, Gatti says it would be very difficult to pass a tax or increase property millage to generate income. The commission would have to approve it by a majority, and then it would have to be sent to all three police juries for approval. If one does not approve, then it is dead, he said. However, if all three police juries approve, then it will go before a vote of the people. He also emphasized that if a tax is being considered, it has to be a project that directly benefits the lake and the residents of Lake Bistineau.

He also addressed the concern of the sale of water from Bistineau, saying that if water is sold to a public entity, the decision to do so must be done by a majority vote from all three police juries, and the proceeds would be split four ways: 25 percent to the commission and 25 percent to each police jury.

Webster Parish Police Juror Dustin Moseley, District 12, says he was pleased with the turnout.

"I still think there are a lot of people out there that don't know about the bill," he said. "Most of the concerns they (Bistineau residents) had were some of the same concerns I had when I read it, and that's the reason I had for holding a meeting like this, to let them have their say on the bill."

The next two town hall meetings are set for 6 p.m. Friday, April 29, at the Ringgold Annex, located at 2145 Mill Street, and at 3 p.m. at the American Legion Post 388 at Koran, located at 5401 Highway 527 in Haughton.

---

**Share this:**

---

**Related**

[Town hall meeting set for Bistineau bill](#)

Apr 19, 2016

In "Webster Parish"

[Open tray, education, budget top bills of 2015](#)

Mar 17, 2015

In "State"

[Resident: Lake Bistineau drawdown a must](#)

Sep 19, 2014

In "Webster Parish"

